



**JOB
DEVOTIONAL**

By Pastor Phil Emerson

NAME: _____

OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

Lifegroup 12s

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

Lifegroup 3s

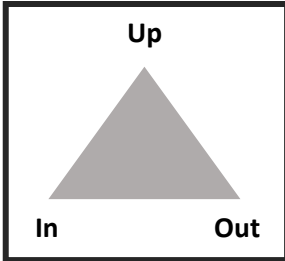
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.

INTRODUCTION TO JOB

This is a book of unbelievable calamity, desolation, and pain. It's a book of steely, brassy heavens where God seems to disappear off the stage after the first act, leaving us wondering if He will ever return. But return He does – in the closing scenes of this desperate story of one man's tenacity, faith, and endurance, holding on to God with his last thread.

The author, date, and place of the book of Job are all uncertain. It may be that Job himself recorded his experiences or there may have been another anonymous author. Judging by the style of Hebrew, some scholars judge Job to be the oldest book in the Old Testament. E.W. Bullinger, in 'The Companion Bible' said this about Job: *"Ancient it is beyond all dispute. It probably belongs to the period covered by the book of Genesis; and possibly, to the time of Abraham. Its lesson, therefore, is the oldest lesson we could have; and it takes us back to the first lesson taught in the Bible itself."*

The book of Job is not primarily about one man's suffering and pain. Job's problem is not so much financial or social or medical (though he deals with all these issues); his central problem is *theological*. Job must deal with the fact that in his life God does not act the way he thought God would, and should, act. In this drama, the book of Job is not so much a record of solutions and explanations to this problem, it is more a revelation of Job's experience and the answers carried *within* his experience. This is an amazing teaching of trusting God when things are going badly.

You know the drill. Grab your Bible, journal, pen, and a cuppa.

Love and prayers,

Phil

Live

I love the introduction to this man, Job. It is a common reality that first impressions stick and our first impression of Job can be nothing other than good. Before we get past the first verse, we are told this man's true pedigree: he was blameless, a man of complete integrity; he feared God and stayed clear of evil. That's a resumé extraordinaire, if ever I saw one.

The startling lesson for me when I study Job is this: we live in a fallen world and as a result of that, good conduct and lifestyle may not get rewarded, and bad behaviour is not always punished. When I was young, this was a struggle for me and I remember taking it to God. He brought me to Psalm 73 where I discovered I wasn't the only person who struggled with this seeming injustice. The writer of Psalm 73, Asaph, the head of King David's worship team, had the self-same frustration. He handled it much better than me. After battling with the matter, this was his conclusion: *"I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny."*

It is not known for sure, but it would seem that Job lived through the days of the patriarchs or perhaps the days of Moses. Moses could have used Job's land during the forty years minding his father-in-law's sheep. But these are only theories and we cannot presume to know. We do know that God allowed this inspired story to hit the pages of Holy Writ. I am forever indebted to Him for the wisdom, endurance, and trust it produces in us all.

Another thing I love in this chapter is Job's love and dedication to his family. What an example of a father he truly is, praying for his children and repenting on their behalf in case they had forgotten. Great lessons to behold in this book!

Pray

Father, through the journeys of my life I have been learning to trust You more than understand You. I thank You for the Bible, Your inspired writings. I really thank You for books like Job from which the phrase has come "the patience of Job". Develop this in me as I lift my eyes to You – that's where my help comes from. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. The dialogue recorded here was completely unknown to Job; though if he was the author of the book, God must have revealed this heavenly behind-the-scenes conversation to him at a later time. Both God and Satan understood that the attack could only come to Job if God allowed it. We call this God's 'permissive will'. Nothing can get past Him. He is in full control. Although God did not actively send the Sabaeans, the Chaldeans, the fire or the wind, they could only come by His permission.

After this chapter begins thirty-five chapters of discussion between Job and his so-called friends. All that discussion must be put in the context of the genuine love and concern these friends had for Job. There is a sense in which they *earned* their right to speak by their sacrificial display of compassion. While it is true that Job ultimately suffered more at the hands of these friends than by the attacks of the foe, some recognition must be made of the goodness of the men. They came and wept with Job and then sat with him for seven days. That sounds like pretty good friendship to me.

It's comforting to know that nothing can befall us but it first has to run by our heavenly Father. We know from Scripture that He resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. The last thing we would ever want to experience is God's resistance, so, we should humble ourselves before Him. May God forgive us for trying to justify our haughtiness, coolness, and withdrawal. As believers we cannot allow ourselves to be shaped by circumstances or by people, only by God. We may react to people and say, "Well, if they're going to act like that, I'm just going to sidestep them." We do not have that privilege. Sometimes we can confuse the self-righteous mumble jumble going on in our head with prayer, talking to ourselves and not to God.

Pray

Father, forgive me for relishing the thought of being right when there's everything wrong with my attitude. As the day unfolds, please grant me humility, kindness, and courage to move towards difficult situations. Bring glory to Yourself and gentleness to my heart. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

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Live

Catastrophe after catastrophe. His farmland wealth stolen. His servants murdered at the merciless hands of the Sabaeans and the Chaldeans. Fire from heaven wiping out his sheep and their shepherds. And as if that wasn't enough, all his sons and daughters dead in one fatal blow. That was just chapter 1. Then, in chapter 2, poor Job is stripped of his health, suffering boils from head to toe.

This chapter begins the battle in Job's mind and soul, and we hear for the first time his words. While he is careful not to curse God, he curses the very day he was born. He will not lose more or suffer more than he already has, even though his physical pain will continue for a while. Now the battle enters an entirely different arena – the arena of Job's mind and soul. How will he choose to think about his suffering? How will he choose to think about what *others* think about his suffering? How will he choose to think about God in all of this? These are the questions that take up the remainder of the book, questions that come to any sufferer. The catastrophic loss itself is only an entry point into the agonising battle in the mind and soul. His three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar turn up. These men are known for their wisdom, although we find out the full truth of that wisdom towards the end of the book.

If you will allow me to speak personally for a moment, I have to say that in my time of knowing God, fifty-five years now, He has been faithful to rescue and keep me from all kinds of strange teachings, especially from gospels which are no gospel at all – the 'healthy, wealthy, and wise' prosperity stuff that disallows God's people to ever suffer. I just don't know where they get that from. Suffering comes to us all at times, but God is always faithful to carry us through (not always around, which is what we would like!).

Pray

Father, I want to know You not just in the good and the great but in the pain and the grief. Therefore, strengthen my heart daily with Your grace. Though I know and love You in part, You know and love me perfectly, and that is all I need to know. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This begins a long section in the book of Job where Job's friends counsel him. They speak in three rounds, each speech followed by a reply from Job. At the end of all this talking, God answers Job and his friends, and settles the matter. Eliphaz based his first thoughts around Job's complaint recorded in chapter 3. He reasoned that Job would not complain like this unless he was guilty in some way, that his guilty conscience was the root of his suffering. Many people think the same even today. When something like a tsunami or earthquake hits a country, instead of reaching out in love and prayer they turn to judgment. As it turned out, this was a false assumption by Eliphaz. Job's complaint was simply the cry of a life in pain, not because he consciously or unconsciously thought he deserved this calamity because of his sin. I'm reminded of Matthew 7 which warns, "*Judge not that you be not judged.*" My mum taught me that when I point a finger, three point back at me.

There are many ways to be a good friend, and one of the most important is to faithfully bring our friends to God in prayer. Sometimes we hear it said, "All we can do is pray," but that is by far the *greatest* thing we can do. It would be a great idea today to bring our friends who are suffering spiritual disconnection and crisis of faith to the throne of grace where they will find mercy and grace to help. For those who have lost the joy of their salvation, it would be good to pray that God would restore their first love, settle peace, and bring a certain hope that He is enough. Pray for your friends who are suffering in broken and messy relationships, for few things make us more vulnerable to emotional anguish, poor choices, and deep regrets. May God send grace to them in the shape of flesh and blood – you, a listener and warrior of prayer. May we all be good friends who love well and judge not!

Pray

Father, there are some stories in the lives of friends over which I wish I could be sovereign for a moment and fix the seemingly unfixable. For these friends, and others, show me how to love well, stay present, and extend grace. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

All three of Job's friends jumped to the conclusion that there was a really bad skeleton somewhere in Job's cupboard and he was holding some secret from them. In their minds, all of his suffering was a result of this gross hidden sin. It's important to remember what we said at the beginning of the book – Job was oblivious to the conversation in heaven between Satan and God. We have the whole story, but I ask us all today, would we be any different from Job's friends if we didn't know it? We are always trying to hang disaster on something.

The remarks from Eliphaz were backhanded references to Job and his sons. He argued that the fact such great disaster fell upon them was proof that they were foolish and in sin. Eliphaz said it tactfully, yet he still said it. Apparently, Job was not seeking God and was not committing his cause to God in his affliction. It is worth remembering that the Lord singled out Eliphaz at the end of the book for a special rebuff: *"The LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."* While Eliphaz was a friend of Job's who wept with him and sat quietly with him for a whole week, he then feels he has earned the right to fling out judgments and advice.

The Apostle Paul actually quoted Eliphaz's words from verse 13 – the only time Job is quoted in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 3:19), and personally speaking, when I read Eliphaz's words, I am impressed. Much of what he says has depth and meaning and is true. He just got it all out of context. There is much to learn about wisdom of speech from today's passage. One can never be too careful in this. We all want to be a great strength to our friends, especially those going through storms in life; however, we also want to be known as one who speaks the truth in love.

Pray

Father, give me the wherewithal to know when I'm speaking Your truth and when I'm giving my opinion. Help me to realise the latter is usually just hot air. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

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Live

I love this chapter today. Please don't think me irreverent, but if I was writing the headings in the Bible, I would entitle this chapter 'Job Strikes Back!' Job's response to the words of Eliphaz was to complain about the greatness of his suffering. Eliphaz, with his well-intentioned but wrong analysis of Job's problem only made his suffering worse. Job described how the words of Eliphaz 'tasted'; he says they were like the tasteless white of an egg or like eating food with no salt; brilliant description, don't you think! Eliphaz's words were weak and flavourless, and certainly did not give Job any health or strength.

The NIV translation of verse 13 is helpful: *"Do I have any power to help myself, now that success has been driven from me?"* These words of Job can bring immense comfort to the many sufferers who have felt rage but have been too ashamed to express it. I am reminded of the old hymn, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer."

Speaking very personally again, when my wife of twenty-eight years, Jill, died in March 2006, I was thrown into unbelievable turmoil and grief. She had died suddenly. There was no warning, no sickness, just sudden death. The trauma, darkness, and pain were unbearable. I was hurt and angry at God for allowing this. I had served Him my whole life. How could He do this? Around three months after her death, I read Isaiah 53:4. The NIV puts it this way, *"Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering."* The NKJV says, *"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."* I had never seen this truth before; Jesus not only died and bore all my sin on the cross, He bore my grief, my sorrow, my pain. I learned in those days to speak truthfully to God about my disappointment, even with Him. He is big enough to handle all that's going on in you, I can assure you. And He will reveal Himself in your pain!

Pray

Father, thank You that when I get worn out, You don't roll Your eyes and call me lazy, but Your beloved child. I will quiet myself before You and let You refresh my heart and replenish my resources. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

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Live

Job described his physical condition in painful terms. He suffered from insomnia and his skin affliction, open boils covering his body from head to toe, must have been excruciating. Worse than the disease itself, Job lost all hope of being healed. He believed his only release from pain was death. Job's words here remind us of something remarkable. Though his physical suffering was intense and prolonged, his battle with the inner self raged even stronger. Job's spiritual crisis was deeper than his physical or material crisis. Once again, we benefit from knowing the story behind the story, something Job and his friends did not know at this point in the narrative. Job believed that God was against him and was punishing him, but that wasn't true. The following is a long quote, but it is Spurgeon, which makes it okay! *"Job was not being punished; he was being honoured. God was giving to him a name like that of the great ones of the earth. The Lord was lifting him up, promoting him, putting him into the front rank, making a great saint of him, causing him to become one of the fathers and patterns in the ancient Church of God. He was really doing for Job such extraordinarily good things that you or I, in looking back upon his whole history, might well say, 'I would be quite content to take Job's afflictions if I might also have Job's grace, and Job's place in the Church of God.'"*

This chapter cuts to the chase and brings conviction to our hearts. Resentment comes to us all, as someone steals our parking place or eats the piece of cake we hid in the fridge. It's amazing how quickly a little slight can launch any one of us into a big grudge. What we all need is for the Lord to grant us fresh grace and a bigger heart. About mid-way through this chapter we see how Job redirects his comments from Eliphaz to God. He is wondering now the value of living well and trying to be good. He is almost at the place of wondering does God really care about him at all. Ever been there?

Pray

Father, don't let my vulnerable heart become a garden for the planting of roots of resentment. Write stories of redemption and restoration with the ink of my hurt and Your grace. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

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Live

In the last few chapters, Eliphaz was the intellect, smooth in his thoughts but harsh in his judgments. Next to give his tuppence worth is Bildad who is quick to rebuke Job for his strong words. The problem with him is that he did not stop to consider *why* Job spoke this way. He heard Job's words but did not pause for one minute to consider his pain. Bildad was like everyone else in this drama, unable to see the scene behind the scenes in the heavenly realm. His only way of interpreting Job's situation was to apply the principle of cause and effect, calling Job to repentance. How easily we fall into judging others. Bildad's simple theory was that God is just and He would never punish a just man, therefore, Job must be unjust. Bildad turned out to be crueller in his accusations than Eliphaz; he accuses Job's children of wickedness which brought death upon them. Pretty harsh in my books.

I know these guys sat for a week with Job and wept with him, but it would seem to me they were just loading their guns to blast him when he had gathered a little strength; they thought he needed to take it. In my experience, which I referred to in the chapter 6 reading, the toughest questions that come in grief do not get instant answers, if they ever get answered at all. At times, we are best keeping quiet. Just being present gives people the moral support they need. It is good to remember that people aren't always looking for answers, but for company. We sometimes forget that until Jesus returns, suffering will be more the norm than the exception. Everything and everyone is broken, so to suffer is to be human and alive. The day of no more death, mourning, crying, or pain is coming but that day is not yet. However, until that day, there is the assurance that God is in full control and has all the grace we need to suffer for His glory.

Pray

Father, grant me the joyful assurance that the glory that will be revealed to me will make all the sufferings of my brief journey in this world seem like feathers compared to the weight of eternal goodness lavished on me when Jesus returns. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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Bildad's ramble to Job was essentially information that Job already knew only too well. He knew that the wicked perish in the end. Job's thoughts were circling around the question *why* he was perishing. Job's answer to Bildad seems much more gracious than the hard words in the previous chapter. He began by agreeing with Bildad's general premise that God rewards the righteous and either corrects or judges sinners, but Job primarily wanted to know, "If I have not been righteous enough to escape the judgment of God, then who can be?"

Job's question is the most important question in the world. How can a man find God's approval? How can a man be considered righteous and not guilty before God? I love this ... we have a great promise of a Mediator, one whom Job did not yet know about. *"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5). What Job longed for we have fulfilled in Jesus. Job says in verse 33, *"If only there were a mediator between Him [God] and me, someone who could bring us together, the mediator could make Him stop beating me."* If only Job could have known how prophetic those words were, that one day (the timing of which had already been decided) one would come who would fulfil all the qualifications of a mediator, someone to stand between two parties in disagreement.

There is a verse I love in Hebrews 3:1 that calls Jesus our Apostle and High Priest. It is the only time in the Bible these two titles are found together. As our Apostle, Jesus stands before us on behalf of the Godhead. As our High Priest, He stands before God and all of heaven on our behalf. This, to me, is one of the great assurances of our Holy Bible. Would Job later regret some of the things he was saying? Yes, he would. But who could blame him for such words and reactions to his suffering?

Pray

Father, I am so thankful for Jesus. It is in Him I live and move and have my very being. He is my all in all. By His blood I am justified before You, my righteous Abba Father. What more do I need? In Him I have all things. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

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Job would eventually allow all of this horrible stuff to refine him and make him a much better person; the problem is, he is not in that place at the moment. And who would blame him? Job asked God what any of us would ask, “Why are You doing this?” Job was a smart man and knew that God was the author of creation and of mankind. He had the same understanding as the psalmist who said, “*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well.*” (Psalm 139:14). It is only God who can reveal the answers to our all-important questions around suffering and whether we like it or not, He seems to use a very common process called *time*!

We see today in Job how easy it is to slip into self-pity, seeing only our own hurt and brokenness. I have shared in this devotional my own personal journey with grief and I remember when Jill died, for months, I just couldn’t get my eyes turned outward from my own soul. As a pastor, that was so difficult because I really wanted to think of others more, but I just couldn’t fully function in that area at that time. I would often pray, “God, please turn my eyes outward again, out of my own pain.” This is where I resonate with our friend Job. It is so easy to become swallowed up in our own pain. The problem is that if people choose to stay in this place for unhealthy periods of time, walls get built; no one gets in, and worse still, they themselves don’t get out. Job, I think, took this one step further though; in verses 13 and 14 he actually accuses God of waiting for His divine moment just to get him. Then, in the last few verses, it is like it is all over and he is heading to a dark land of gloom, confusion, and joyless death. Poor Job is in a rough place!

Pray

Father, I have been learning in my journey through life that I need to trust You even when I don’t understand You. You are God and You do all things well. Your love for me never fades or fails, it never ebbs or flows, but is constantly flowing from the magnitude of Your being. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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Live

Welcome today Job's third friend, Zophar, who is the bluntest and cruellest yet. The old saying jumps to mind, "With friends like these, who needs enemies!" Zophar criticises Job for his complaining and tells Job that he actually deserves far worse from God. He is the most hardened of Job's accusers and generally speaks without feeling or pity.

There is much to admire in the theology and philosophy of Zophar and Job's other friends. They say much that is generally true and valuable, backed by the wisdom of ancient scholars. They believed in God's power and in His absolute righteousness. They also believed that God would forgive a sinner and take him back into favour if the sinner responded correctly to the punishment God appointed. The main problem, however, was that they misapplied some of the truths and forgot that they were not omniscient. When this happens, half-truths can be worse than no truth at all.

Job had been so worked upon by the grace of God that his life was pure. If anyone's life was like a stream of clear, see-through water, his was. People looked at him and they saw a pure man, but, just like any man or woman, there was a residue of self-reliance and pride at the bottom. It wasn't huge and it wasn't damning, but it was there. When God shook Job, the sediment coloured the stream and you find Job saying some terrible things about God. God knew that it was there and He knew that in shaking this godly, blameless man there would arise some imperfection in his life that would need to be purged. God may be permitting some stuff to come into your life just to refine exceedingly beautiful faith. Any suffering person I've ever talked to bears witness to the fact that they have seen more of God and have come to know and trust God more deeply in their suffering than if it hadn't come.

Pray

Father, forgive me for using Your Word for my own ends. Help me not to be quick to fire out useless advice when I haven't earned the right or haven't enough knowledge of the issue at hand. I want to be a true friend to discouraged and despairing people, not have a 'holier than thou' attitude. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

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Live

Today we have Job responding again to the onslaught from Zophar. He is basically saying that these boys haven't a baldly clue what they are talking about. Now that all three friends have spoken, Job takes the opportunity to give his opinion of their counsel, *"When you die, wisdom will die with you."* This statement is dripping with sarcasm but is an appropriate answer to these three who thought they had all the answers to his dilemma. This was the first sarcastic remark that Job made. He had been treated so poorly by his friends, especially by Zophar, that I am not surprised. He said that these three friends thought they were wise. He realizes that he doesn't know the answers either, but Job remembers what his life used to be like. The truth is, neither you nor I have any reason to be puffed up with our knowledge; only God is infinite in wisdom, and power, and justice.

Job spoke of himself as having as much wisdom as any of his friends. He was not morally or intellectually inferior to any one of them. They had no right to presume that he was of less stature with God than they were. He used to call on God and receive an answer; in those bright days he didn't feel like he needed a lamp because his life was at ease. Now everything is different and his friends only mock and misunderstand him. To Job, it seems as if his life prior to all this is like a mirage. Before, everything seemed to make sense, the righteous seemed to be blessed, and the wicked seemed to be afflicted. It is all different now. We sense that Job was describing himself as this prominent man without understanding, a man wandering in a pathless wilderness, a man groping in the dark without light who staggered like a drunken man. I suppose it is true that we all wonder where we went wrong when hard times fall on us.

Pray

Father, if anyone understands what it's like to be misunderstood it is Jesus. As I study Job and see how his friends treated him, I am reminded that all Jesus' friends deserted Him and left Him in the hour preceding Calvary. Those immortal words, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me,"* ring in my ears today. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

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RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Job objects to the claim of superior knowledge on the part of his friends. To them, especially Zophar, the situation seemed so simple. In their eyes, Job must be ignorant to not see what they believed was so obvious. The friends of Job claimed to know wisdom and speak wisely, but Job dismissed their supposed guidance as mere platitudes. Their wisdom had no substance, no use, and left Job feeling hurt in a load of verbal ashes. I find some of Job's retorts quite amusing, like verse 4, where he likens these boys to doctors who haven't a baldly clue how the human body even functions!

I really love verse 15. Job says, *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."* This is the attitude that will see Job through his past and present crises. He did not understand his situation and felt that God was against him, but at the same time he could still exclaim, *"Yet will I trust Him."* What a beautiful lesson. He is saying, 'God may allow my sorrows and grief to the point I cannot survive them. I may be exposed to hard things, yet I am willing to meet them if I can stand before God with clean hands and a pure heart.' The word *"slay"* or *"kill"* refers to temporal death, not in any way eternal punishment. It means merely that Job was determined to maintain his cause and defend his character no matter what. This deliberate choice expresses what was really the character of the man, even though occasionally, when he became impatient, he gave in to different feelings. What an amazing character this man truly is; most surely an example for us all.

Pray

Father, I offer up Job's prayer today: *"Only two things do not do to me, then I will not hide myself from You. Withdraw Your hand far from me and let not the dread of You make me afraid. Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, then You respond to me. How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin."* Job's words catch the attitude of the psalmist: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

We are now entering the final remarks to this first round of conversations. It's a bit like the bell is about to ring in the boxing match. Having mentioned the frailty of men in general and his own frailty in particular, Job now expands on the idea – frail man, a mighty God, and a life that is most unfair. Job despairs that perhaps God demands something of him that he is unable to be or do. If God demands perfect cleanness before He will relieve Job's affliction, Job knew he could never meet that standard.

We can explain Job's lack of knowledge of the afterlife by understanding the principle of 2 Timothy 2:10, that Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. The Old Testament does not say an awful lot about resurrection of the dead because Jesus had not yet risen from the dead, conquering it forever. I'm so thankful I'm a New Testament saint. How often I've heard this passage in verses 1,2 quoted at a graveside, *"Mortals, born of woman, are of few days and full of trouble. They spring up like flowers and wither away; like fleeting shadows, they do not endure."* And yet, when I read this in the context of its writing, my heart goes out to Job. I wonder how I could have coped in such a situation having lost all and, on top of that, have a bunch of people around me who were far from encouraging. I'm sure we have all used the phrase, "The patience of Job" but when I read chapters like this I think not of his patience, but of his wisdom. He was a very wise man. He realises that just to have all the theory and the doctrines right is not enough for life. It is when those theories get tested that the rubber hits the road and we see the real person coming to the fore. Someone once said that a drought only drives the roots of a tree deeper in search of water, and so it is with God's true children!

Pray

Father, thank You that You are my Abba. You are Yahweh, and You are my Father. When the world around me fails and creaks, what else do I need? Thank You that my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. In His strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Things are starting to heat up. Eliphaz was not impressed by Job's eloquent expression of dependence on God. Now he gets sharper and ruder and replies with a rebuke, accusing Job of empty knowledge, unprofitable talk, and casting off fear. I love this quote from Oswald Chambers' book on Job, 'Our Ultimate Refuge': *"When once the sledge-hammer of tradition is brought to bear there is nothing more to say... The Pharisees adopted this method with Jesus... The 'Eliphaz' method has hindered more souls in developing the life with God than almost any other thing."*

There is no tenderness in this tone from Eliphaz, no love at all. One can only think, poor Job! What a fight of affliction he had to contend with – his body wasted and tortured with sore disease, his mind harassed by Satan, his heart wrung with the unkindness and false accusations of his so-called friends. No wonder he was greatly agitated, distracted, and sometimes thrown off guard. I wonder how I would have dealt with this hardship.

Ever wonder how come people love to think they know all the answers? These friends of Job agitate me somewhat today and bring out the worst in me. Maybe it's because I know that I might have reacted just as they did if I was in the same situation. I am reminded of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where He addressed the problems that occur when people focus on external behaviour as the main definition of righteousness rather than a change of heart. Jesus points out that people who equate righteousness with external behaviour tend to judge and criticise others. We live in a day when there is much distortion around our image of God and condemning voices from religious people. All too prevalent in our society is the notion of a God who has it in for you, the thought that broken people have no claim on Him. I love Isaiah 42:3 that speaks prophetically of Jesus, *"A bruised reed He will not break, and a smouldering wick He will not snuff out."*

Pray

Father, may I speak with heaven's voice to my friends and neighbours, and never be known as a know-it-all but as one who knows You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I think it's funny how Job calls these guys "*miserable comforters*". Job hoped this reproach would shame his accusers into seeing how they had failed to help him. Their all too great confidence in their own wisdom made them unable to properly sympathise with Job. They did much better in the days when they simply sat silently with him. Job is tired of the same old sermon: 'You are sinner. You need to repent. Prepare for death.' He is weary, worn out. He describes them "*blowing hot air*". Job's friends had taught him nothing, given no usable advice, and in general aggravated his condition rather than alleviate it. I can recall from my darkest times not what people said but the fact they were there. Huge lesson here. I tend to think if the roles were reversed, Job would comfort and encourage, offer sympathy and assurance, affection and love.

In today's reading, we see how Job knew he needed a mediator, someone to bridge the gap between himself and a holy God. Job also knew by faith that such a person existed and could be trusted. This made Job a believer in Jesus before Jesus ever walked the earth; he had faith in the Messiah to come. When Job spoke these words, he could only imagine a Christ, an advocate, an intercessor, a mediator! Jesus is our mediator, our go-between. Jesus bridges the chasm created by sin and represents us before God the Father as our High Priest. He liberates us from guilt and fear of failure.

It is important to remember that Job's insights are coming from a person in pain. J.H. Jowett said, "*God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters.*" Abraham Lincoln said, "*To ease another's heartache is to forget one's own.*" And Martin Luther wrote: "*Human comfort and divine comfort are of different natures: human comfort consists in external, visible help, which a man may see, hold and feel; divine comfort only in words and promises, where there is neither seeing, hearing, or feeling.*"

Pray

Father, thank You for Jesus my Mediator, my Messiah, the Righteous One who died for my sin to bring me before a righteous God. I love this so much and I love the strong promises in this passage today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Lack of help from Job's friends (who started out as sympathetic supporters but became critical mockers when Job did not respond to their wisdom as they thought he should) was an especially painful aspect of Job's crisis. These three boys had a reputation for being wise but Job struggles to find any wisdom in any of them. They thought that because they were prosperous and doing okay, they were better than Job and God was more pleased with them. Job was the one in the mess, so they reverted to judgment of him.

The NIV translation of verse 3 is helpful: *"Give me, O God, the pledge You demand. Who else will put up security for me?"* The idea is that Job cries out to God and says, 'You will have to set this right, God; it is beyond me to do it.' This is especially meaningful in light of the main idea from Job's friends that it was *his* responsibility to set things right between himself and God. I love Job's plea. There have been many times in my life when I knew that if God didn't come through for me, I was finished.

It would seem that Job is now giving up on any hope of restoration in this life and thinks death would be a release. I think of the many reasons why we can keep holding on to God's way. One is because Jesus holds us in His strong hand; He is our good Shepherd, He has vanquished every one of our foes and we shall never perish. Another reason is because God has designed to glorify His Son through us, and there must be no gaps in His crown where jewels ought to be. A third reason is because the Holy Spirit has chosen to make us His residence and home; He is, within us, the eternal spring of a holy life. Those are just some of our reasons to hold on in hard times. Just like for Job, it is nothing of us and everything in Christ.

Pray

Father, thank You for Your love, acceptance, and calling. Thank You that according to Ephesians 1:4, You called me even before You laid the foundations of this old world. It's pretty cool and pretty reassuring to know that You love me so. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

When we get to this point in the book it seems that everyone is getting tired of hearing each other talk, yet the matter was far from resolved. Bildad says to Job, 'Just look at yourself. You are tearing yourself to pieces in anger. Your condition is all the evidence anyone needs to see that you are in sin and need to repent.' The section in verses 11-16 contains a pretty strong description of death itself, given the horrific title "*the king of terrors*".

Job maintains his innocence even though he doesn't know why he is suffering. He has ruled out secret or unconfessed sin as the reason. His pain is severe and we see a man broken and bearing what seems like an unbearable burden. I think if we asked his friends, they would tell us that they did (albeit in their misguided way) love Job and their counsel was intended to expose hidden sin so that if Job died, he would die with a clean heart. With a clean heart might come health and a return to prosperity or, at the very least, prepare him to meet God. Unfortunately, though, the accusations continue to pile up, combined with abusive speech, self-exaltation, anger, and now arrogance. 'Is God to forsake the earth and all the other needs on the planet just to meet your need?' Bildad asks. Such sarcasm. Would God move heaven and earth just for Job's sake? Bildad is in effect asking the question, 'Job, do you think you deserve special treatment? Do you want God to come down from heaven and explain what's going on in your life?' Job responds, 'All this has happened to me, and you say I must therefore be a bad man, but I say I am not. You have all the theory, but I have the experience and reality.'

Pray

Father, I am reminded today of the song, "Lord, You have my heart; now I will search for Yours. Let me be to You a sacrifice." This seems to be Job's experience as he searched for You and refused the counterfeits that his friends were offering him. Help me today to find You amidst the hustle and bustle of stuff. When I'm just too busy, Lord, I want to lean into You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

No matter what Job said, his friends maintained that he was wicked, reminding him of the evidence, 'Evil things do not happen to the good, but to the wicked.' Of course, we know this is silly and can see that decent people struggle and evil people gain wealth and fame. Talent does not necessarily mean success, and success and wealth are not markers of either wisdom or purity. C.H. Spurgeon said this of Job, *"They struck at him with their hard words, as if they were breaking stones on the roadside. We ought to be very careful what we say to those who are suffering affliction and trial, for a word, though it seems to be a very little thing, will often cut far more deeply and wound far more terribly than a razor would."* That's a pretty cool way of putting it. We used to say the little rhyme at school, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never harm me." How wrong is that little rhyme, nonsense actually. Names are brutal. The tongue is the worst and most devastating of any member of the body. James 3 reminds us that it is *"a restless evil, full of deadly poison"*.

Job was not afraid of judgment because he was confident that the charges against him were false and that his Redeemer would vindicate him. Our Redeemer also clears us of our guilt and shame. Philip Bliss's old hymn puts it like this: "'Man of Sorrows!' what a name for the Son of God who came, ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah! What a Saviour! / Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood; sealed my pardon with His blood. Hallelujah! What a Saviour! / Guilty, vile, and helpless we; spotless Lamb of God was He; full atonement! can it be? Hallelujah! What a Saviour! / Lifted up was He to die; 'It is finished!' was His cry; now in Heav'n exalted high. Hallelujah! What a Saviour! / When He comes, our glorious King, all His ransomed home to bring, then anew His song we'll sing: Hallelujah! What a Saviour!"

Pray

Father, for peace in You today I pray. Keep my eyes, ears, and heart fixed on You because after all, You alone are my joy and my strength, my Alpha and Omega, my beginning and my end. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Zophar stands his ground and retracts nothing of what he had said. Like many of his type in the present day, he was determined to believe that his judgment was infallible and that *he* could not err. It's kinda weird that Job's friends did not seem to regard him as a wicked man when they first came to him in chapter 2. It is as if Job provoked this judgment when he absolutely refused to agree with them that he was a sinner who needed to repent. They therefore came to regard Job as a stubborn and wicked man.

Zophar, as with the rest of Job's friends, left little room for grace and was narrow-minded with no compassion and no mercy. Who wants to be like that? Not me. The rounds of speeches sound like a courtroom where the defence is poor Job and the prosecution is Job's would be friends. The friends are allowed to give speeches and Job is allowed to respond to each speech. Zophar gave his first speech in chapter 11 and now he gives a second one.

All of Job's friends claim his suffering stems from his sin. In this second series of speeches, the theme is the fate of the wicked. In a series of stinging accusations Zophar reminds Job that a wicked person's behaviour is fatal; no matter how much a person relishes their meal, the food they eat is like a poison that will eventually kill them. He says the wealth of the wicked is temporary and their death will be terrifying and painful. Does the Bible give encouragement to the wicked? No, the wicked will reap what they sow.

May we never be a Zophar and miss the richness of God's amazing beauty. Everything we already know about God fills our hearts with awe and worship, yet there is so much more to see and know. May we wade into the bottomless ocean of God's glory and love, and may He continue to open the eyes of our heart.

Pray

Father, show me more of Yourself. Expand my capacity for knowing and marvelling at You, especially as I minister to others. May all my idols fail me and all my broken cisterns remain broken. May I fully rest and rely on You alone. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I love how Job says, *“Listen carefully to my words”*. Because of the way his friends kept repeating their arguments to him, it was easy for Job to feel that they simply were not listening. Job asks them, *“Is my complaint directed to a human being?”* This demonstrates again that Job’s real point of crisis was his conflict with God, not man, especially not his friends. His crisis was fundamentally spiritual in nature rather than a medical, economic, social or family crisis. His struggle was with God and he wondered where God was in the midst of this very dark time.

My fiercest battles are usually with God too. Please allow me to go into personal experiences again. A Saturday afternoon some years ago is etched in my mind. I was recounting some severe losses and was having a go at God. My questions were, ‘Why this, God?’ and ‘Why me? How could You allow this? If everything has to pass Your permissive will then how could You not just say no to this? And how come all the wicked people seem to get by much better?’ I was driving at the time and these questions were coming out in exasperated gasps and oceans of tears. I remember the silence. No booming voice. No heralding angel reassuring me of my calling. Just silence! I was angry, and confused, and hurting like mad. But then, in the silence, I remember a peace flooding my soul. I pulled over and laid my head back on the headrest of the lorry. I remembered a little phrase from Psalm 73, *“... till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.”* A worship leader named Asaph penned this psalm and asked all my questions, but when he got into the presence of God, he saw everything was okay! I think Job is going to be okay.

Pray

Father, as I read through the Scriptures, I am reminded that our biggest battles are usually with You rather than with the enemy, and they usually circle around identity. We can see how Job was the object of Your extreme love, but it was hard for him to see that. Help me today to trust You even when I can’t understand You. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Thankfully, this is Eliphaz's final round of speeches. I'm actually getting tired listening to these chaps. The more I read the accusations from these men the more I feel that they really want to break Job. Maybe they feel like they are breaking in a horse, taming it for its own betterment. I don't know. It is all really harsh. Eliphaz thought Job was arrogant and that he believed himself to be a special favourite to God because he was so righteous. He wanted Job to consider that God needed nothing from him and Job added nothing to God. This begins a remarkable list of groundless accusations against Job. Eliphaz mainly accuses him of greed and cruelty for the sake of riches. None of this was true but Eliphaz made this assumption because Job was once rich and now was stripped of everything. He could not think of another explanation for Job's crisis. How feeble we are when we try to analyse God's ways in earthly ways. Today's reading teaches us it is best to keep our mouths shut when we try to judge others. Matthew 7 reminds us not to judge lest we be judged. We can see where this story with Job's friends is going.

I read this funny story recently and thought it was apt for today. The story is told of Joan, a town gossip and self-appointed supervisor of the town's morals who kept sticking her nose into other people's business. Local residents were unappreciative of her activities but feared her enough to maintain their silence. However, she made a mistake when she accused George, a local man, of being an alcoholic after she saw his pickup truck parked outside the town's only bar. George, a dedicated Christian and man of few words, stared at her for a moment and just walked away without saying a word. Later that evening, he parked his pickup truck in front of her house and left it there all night. Her gossiping ceased. I love this story and I love Job and George!

Pray

Father, may my words be wise and loving, truthful and honest, always speaking of You in every situation. I love how when we were still in our sins Christ died for us. He didn't judge me even though I stood condemned, but He loved me and paid the ransom for my sin. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

At the close of Eliphaz's speech, Job continued to feel desperate. The wisdom and counsel of Eliphaz and others brought no relief to him; it just made his mental and spiritual agony worse. Job felt separated from God. This was not the first crisis in his life (though it was the worst). He had found comfort and solace in God in prior times, but in this catastrophe, he felt he could not find God. Perhaps you, like me, have found yourself in this dark place. It wasn't that Job was displeased with God's actions. It wasn't that he was angry with the way God was treating him. No, Job's bitter lament was that he could not find God, anywhere. If only he knew where he could find God. If only he knew God's address, then he would march right up to God's front door and give God a piece of his mind! But Job couldn't find God. He went forward and backward, to the left, to the right, but God was nowhere to be found. How can you begin to express your pain, your need for help, your utter desolation and devastation when you can't even locate the person with whom you need to talk? What do you do when it feels like God is hiding? Where on earth might you find this God who is supposed to be in control of all the little details of this world, yet seems so very absent when we need Him most?

Today, as I read this chapter, I find myself drawn to what I call my 'Oh Lord' psalm. Psalm 3 is when David has been ousted from his throne by his own son. His cry was, *"Oh Lord, how many are my foes, how many there are that rise against me. Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God."* David was in a dark place, and yet his next cry is, *"But You, oh Lord, are a shield about me, my glory and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the Lord and He answered me."* Even when we feel desolate and deserted, He is there. I love this assurance.

Pray

Father, when everyone and everything fails, thank You that You never fail. You are the same yesterday, today, and forever, and on that we can rest our lives and our eternal destiny. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Job knew how wicked the wicked were; what he could not comprehend was why God did not judge them as they deserved. In powerful poetic images, Job describes the kind of sin that happens under the cover of darkness. In these verses Job sounds like Asaph in Psalm 73 who was troubled at the prosperity of the wicked until he went into the house of God and understood their end. If you're like me, you have wondered the same thing as Job and Asaph. Poor Job seems to be condemned by the self-righteous opinions of these friends, and yet he knows that he is innocent. We may expect him to utter strong words against God, but instead he puts God against God, if you understand what I mean. The God he seems to see now and the God he thought he knew are not adding up. The God he knows within him seems to clash with the God outside him.

It is only by a long and hard struggle that we see the true God and there are no shortcuts or easy paths to the sunlit sky. This is the great search every true believer must undertake. True knowledge of God can only come through struggling. The search for God depends on an inner knowledge of God. It is weird that we know God, and yet are searching for Him. I think of the little chorus that sings, *"Lord, You have my life, now I will search for Yours."* If our hearts are true, if our lives are sincere and pure, we have the guarantee that we will see God in the fulness of His glory. See that you struggle to find God and while you are searching, remember to be true and search on.

Pray

Father, I'm sorry for the times I look at wickedness and evil, and, like Job, wonder why You don't act. I know You are a long-suffering Father who is in control of all things at all times. This is an incredible reassurance as I journey through life. I have to keep remembering that there is none righteous, no, not one. Jesus, You were the only sinless person to walk on this planet and the reason You did so was to pay the price for my sin. I'm glad You are my Saviour. In Your strong name I pray. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

At the end of it all, Job's friends got to the point where they were so concerned about being right that they forgot to be concerned about helping Job. Bildad's final words are only six verses long, indicating that the arguments are fizzling out. In fact, you will notice that Zophar does not even speak, which is notable because in every cycle we have seen each friend speak in turn. The friends' arguments have run out of steam and Job remains unconvinced. Bildad's final point is that humans cannot be right before God nor be found pure. Nothing is pure before God and Job is nothing more than a maggot or a worm. While we must maintain a humble view of ourselves, God does not come to us and tell us that we are worms and maggots. We are His sheep and His creation, His children whom He loves.

In the first four verses of chapter 26, Job responds by saying that these friends have been no help at all. Instead of helping him, they have kicked him when he was down. The rest of the chapter is Job's description of the power and majesty of God. Job's description here is amazing and impressive, yet he knew that this did not even begin to describe God. He understood a lot about God, but, like me, he understood enough to know there was far more that he did *not* understand. The universe reveals the might of God that no one escapes from, not even the dead. All that you are able to see in the universe is the fringe of the mighty works of God. Job describes the infinite, incomprehensible sovereignty of God. The full range of God's power defies comprehension. His power is greater than anyone can imagine! Job states that the friends' declaration about God is insufficient because God is far greater and more complex than they could ever understand.

Pray

Father, how great You are. Even the little I know of Your greatness amazes me. Forgive me for thinking that You are just a bigger version of me. You are God, a God who loves His creation. Today I want to worship You for who You are and stand in awe of You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

It seems that Job waited for his friends to reply but they were silent, either out of weariness or frustration. And so, Job continued. One can tell that Job was deeply frustrated at the lack of understanding from his friends. They knew certain principles about God and His way in the world, but they got it wrong big style in Job's situation. I love how this man, amidst all his pain, loss and frustration, never lost faith in his God. What a lesson to grab hold of.

The first verse in the ESV reads, *"And Job again took up his discourse, and said..."* As we have seen in most of these discussion cycles, Job first addresses what his friends have said, and then speaks about God in general. This final ramble is his lengthiest. Notice how Job begins in verse 2, *"As God lives, who has taken away my right ... who has made my soul bitter"*. He feels God has denied him justice by afflicting him, making his soul bitter. Job sets out his righteousness in these first six verses and denies what the friends have said about him. Job declares that God is in the wrong and that he himself is in the right. Furthermore, Job calls for judgment upon all his enemies and calls for God to judge these three friends as his enemies. Job calls them godless and says that God will deal with them. The friends had come to teach Job (at least that's what they thought) but now Job is going to teach them.

The rest of the chapter is a description of the outcome of the wicked. Job confirms that the wicked are cursed by God and will be punished. In the context of this section it would seem that Job is asking for this judgment against the wicked to happen now. God's justice has been withheld from him and it needs to come now.

As my own story unfolds, I want to be known as one who keeps the faith. Life can throw a few curve balls, but I want to be like Job and fix my gaze on heaven and a righteous holy Father. I'm sure you do too!

Pray

Father, I love the fact that Job, even throughout all the accusations and discouragement heaped on top of his already awful situation, still looked to You. What an example. I love You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

There has been much controversy surrounding this chapter, some theologians arguing it was added at a later date. I don't know the answer but simply accept it is here. This chapter is Job's observation of the earth as a treasure house of value, full of riches for those who are willing to search diligently for them. Job speaks of how rare wisdom is, making it all the more valuable. Indeed, it cannot be purchased for gold and is therefore worth more than all other precious metals. Job knew that he needed this precious wisdom; he most certainly knew that his friends needed it.

Here are some interesting questions ... what is the process to gain wisdom? Why is wisdom so much harder to find than anything else? Why can man understand every other riddle of nature except the one riddle that fascinates him? Nothing can escape mankind's scrutiny. Look at him as he digs and mines and searches and sifts, purges the dross with fire, and gathers in the assorted wealth. Just when men seem nearest to wisdom, it slips from their clutch like sand through their fingers. We think we are really smart and that no obstacles can defeat us or perils terrify us. But true wisdom is the truth at which the sons of God shouted in the first morning of creation. God found His joy in flinging out His power in all this radiant majesty. He loved wisdom for being alive, for being the expression of His love. That joy of God in sheer existence passed into the creation of all things, which God said were good.

I love all this questioning. I love the mysteries of the Kingdom, mysteries where God needs to supersize the chambers of my heart to receive more of His grace and wisdom. May He rescue us from our pathetically small notions of His love, wisdom, and goodness. May He free us from the stranglehold of our unbelief revealed in the smallness of our humanity. You have got to just love our God.

Pray

Father, liberate me to be not just satisfied in Christ, but overwhelmed, smitten, and in awe of every good thing You have given me in Jesus. I sing, *'Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the things Your hands have made!'* In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Job longed not only for the days before he lost his children, health, and wealth; he especially longed for the days before he lost his sense of God's closeness. There was a time when he felt that God watched over him, and those days were gone. Please allow me to take this to my personal story again... I remember clearly not being able to find God in my darkest moments. I felt abandoned and alone. I would cry out, 'Not this, Lord. Please not this.' But it seemed to bounce off either the ceiling or the blue sky. What I learned was this: the silence of God does not mean the absence of God. Actually, I began to realise that He was never more present in those days. He actually shared and felt my grief, but, with His ultimate wisdom, He knew that mere words would never fix it. Nothing would fix it. I would have to endure. I would have to go through this dark night of the soul. I love what Spurgeon writes, *"It is a great thing for a man to be near to God; it is a very choice privilege to be admitted into the inner circle of communion, and to become God's familiar friend. Great as the privilege is, so great is the loss of it. No darkness is so dark as that which falls on eyes accustomed to the light."*

I'm sure you can feel Job's pain; maybe you are even feeling similar right now. Don't give up. God is near, very near! Let's remember that sin isn't just crouching at our door to control us; it's also whispering inside our heart to destroy us. We need God. We don't need clichés or sayings; we need a living Christ for the deadly perils in front of us. Like Cain angry at Abel or David sighting a Bathsheba or Esau smelling fresh cooking, we too have strong longings and opportunities for 'relief' that will only lead to destruction. May God never let us outlive our love for Him. May He not have to teach us, yet again, that sin only gives pleasure for a season, a very brief season.

Pray

Father, don't let me settle for crumbs when You give me bread from heaven. Don't let me drink from muddy puddles when You offer fresh living water. Don't let me look to people for what You alone can give. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Job 30

Live

Job mourned the agony of being despised among men. He had been respected and honoured among his people, and now his honour and prosperity had vanished. With powerful language, Job describes the physical agony of his suffering. The NLT has a helpful rendering of verses 18-19: *“In His great power God clutches at my clothing; He grabs me by the collar of my coat. He throws me into the mud.”* Job wondered why God did not treat him with the same kindness he himself had often shown to others. This was a reasonable thought and I’m sure we can all identify with Job. And yet, if we know Jesus as our Lord and King, we can trust and thank Him for being at work in *all* our circumstances for His glory and for our good. He has our hairs and days numbered. He is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. He bottles our tears and will redeem our pain.

Job said two things which greatly aggravated his friends. Firstly, he was overwhelmed by the meanness of people who attacked him. It would be hard to find a more insulting group of people that had the cheek to call themselves ‘friends’. Secondly, Job’s outlook on life is not positive; he is in a place where he sees the glass as half empty. When things are going great, we feel great. When things are going badly, we feel bad. But did you know that God does not get flustered by circumstances? He does not worry about the wind. He does not tremble because of troubles. Most of us, if we are honest, would have to admit that our character is affected by calamity; we ride on life like we ride a rollercoaster. But God is always bigger and better than circumstances. That is why Paul can say, *“I’m absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God’s love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.”* Romans 8:38-39 (MSG)

Pray

Father, You give and You take away. Blessed be Your name. You humble me that You might gladden me. You discipline me that I might delight in You. Forgive me when I don’t understand Your workings. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

In this section, Job protests that he was a godly and blameless man, at least on a human scale. He explains the injustice he felt at his suffering and humiliation, and makes a final defence before his friends who accused him of special sin deserving special judgment. In this long section where Job explains his righteous life, he begins with stating that he guarded his eyes from lustful looks upon young women. This is significant. It suggests that a man's ability to not look upon lustful images is an important indicator of his righteousness and blamelessness. It also suggests that the eyes are a gateway for lust, especially for men. When a man places enticing, sensual, lust-inducing images before his eyes, it frequently causes some level of sexual arousal in the man. It is really interesting that Job makes his claim to righteousness based on sexual purity. Here is food for thought!

Job understood that the human body has its urges. Sexual desire is one of the most powerful urges in the human body. It is like a fire. Kept in a fire-pit or fireplace, a fire is productive, warming, and a great blessing. Let loose, it is a raging, destructive force, or, as Job says, "*a fire that consumes as far as Abaddon*" (destruction). We need true repentance, turning away from our deficient understanding and practice of sexuality and embracing what the Maker of sexuality says about it. We are all powerless, ungodly sinners for whom Jesus gave His life, demonstrating His lavish love for the non-deserving. As those who pursue sexual wholeness, we need to remember that we must first pursue spiritual wholeness. We must pursue friendship and fellowship with God as our heavenly Father, as Job did. This is the beauty and mystery of the Kingdom that I love most, that the Almighty would befriend us and call us His own. Look to the face of Jesus, the One who brings God near, and when He has truly captured your heart, fall at His feet and call Him Saviour, Lord, and Friend.

Pray

Father, I long for the day when I will no longer be even *tempted* to look for peace anywhere else but in You. Until that day, show me more of Your incomparable beauty and the bounty of grace. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Elihu was a silent listener to the whole dialogue up to this point. He was angry with Job because he felt that Job justified himself rather than God, that Job was more concerned about himself being right than God being right. We can easily understand why Elihu felt this, yet what he did not understand was that both Job *and* God were right. The friends had forced themselves and Job into a false dilemma: either Job is right or God is right. They could not see how both could be right.

Elihu was certainly full of words. For this chapter and the next five he will drone on and on, unable to shut up and let anyone else speak. It is by far the longest single speech in the book of Job, longer even than God's speech in later chapters. He likes the sound of his own voice! We all know people who are full of their own importance, but Scripture reminds us to be swift to listen and slow to speak. Elihu tells why he finally must speak, *"It is not the old that are wise, nor the aged that understand what is right. Therefore, I say, 'Listen to me; let me also declare my opinion.'"* Elihu says that it is not age that brings wisdom but the Spirit of God. He got that right. There is not necessarily a connection between grey hair and good theology, between a wizened face and a wise heart. Of course, there is also not necessarily a connection between youth and wisdom either.

The long time that Elihu spent listening was like shaking a can of coke and now, as he finally speaks, it is like the can is opened. We can only imagine the reaction from Job and his three friends at these words of young Elihu. He is on a roll and is going to try and baffle them all with his wisdom, which is actually just hot air!

Pray

Father, forgive me for the times I talk too much or when I know I'm just trying to impress with how much I think I know. I should have learned not to do this by now because I usually come away from these instances feeling stupid and unfulfilled. Only You have all wisdom. I bend my ear to heaven afresh today to hear Your words wherein is life. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

We see here the touches of pride that marked Elihu (and many young men since him). He was anxious to demonstrate to Job and the other friends that he was just as good, just as spiritual, and just as wise as they were. Perhaps Job stirred himself to respond to young Elihu or perhaps the older, suffering Job simply rolled his eyes at the younger man. Whatever Job's reaction, Elihu felt the need to tell him, "*Hold your peace,*" assuring Job that he would teach him wisdom (as if Job couldn't judge for himself whether Elihu's words were wise). I find it funny that these guys are called the "friends" of Job. If these are his friends, I wouldn't like to see his enemies.

Elihu is saying to Job, 'God doesn't owe you any apologies or explanations.' Of course, we know that, and I reckon so did Job. Paul said concerning God that He is like a Potter and we are like the clay, and what right has the clay to say to the Potter, "*Why have You made me like this?*" The Potter has sovereignty over our life. He can make of us whatever He wants. He has absolute power and He doesn't owe us explanations, though we oftentimes demand them from Him. The wonderful thing is that God speaks in such beautiful, natural ways that we're not always aware it is Him speaking. God can speak through dreams. He can speak through visions. He can speak through angels. He can speak through His Word. He can speak through a friend. God can speak to us in many different ways; you can't really limit the ways by which God speaks to us. Elijah said there was a fire; God wasn't in the fire. There was a horrible wind; God wasn't in the wind. There was an earthquake; God wasn't in the earthquake. And then there came a still small voice; God was in the still small voice.

Pray

Father, these friends of Job have a bit of an air about themselves. Forgive me please when I forget that I am but dust and You are the all-wise Creator God. I stand before You today simply undone and accept afresh that You chose me in Christ even before You formed the world. How amazing. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

It's a sad reality that in our times of suffering as we're grasping for answers and struggling to be content with our situation, we suspect that God has gotten something wrong. We might ask, "Why, God?" Sometimes that question reveals that in our hearts we're questioning God's justice and questioning whether He's doing right in our situation. We've seen Job do exactly that in this book we've been studying. What we're going to see today is that this relatively new character, Elihu, takes Job and his mates to task over this questioning of God's ways.

Elihu picks out specific statements of Job to rebuke, but he quotes selectively and unfairly. He picks out only those words of Job that he needed in order to prove his point. We all know people who do this and it is one of my pet hates. Job's words were getting twisted and taken completely out of context. Elihu took Job's agonised cries to God as Job *condemning* God. It was a totally unfair assumption as Job's agony was deeply rooted in the sense that he *did* love God and respect His justice. Like the others, Elihu is blinkered and locked into the inevitable conclusion – Job is to blame and his guilt is measured by the scale of his sufferings.

How quick we are to condemn sometimes. These chapters have been teaching me the folly of quick conclusions. I love how Job, even though he had no idea what was going on, kept his faith and eyes on God. At the end of the chapter, Elihu instructs Job what he should say under his affliction. Isn't that nice of him! He directs Job to humble himself before God and to accept the punishment for his sins. Let's face it, no one bears punishment or chastisement well. If you have any kids, you will know this truth too well. Job has maybe been a bit rash in some of his words, but all in all, I think he has chosen them pretty well and handled himself supremely throughout all this.

Pray

Father, may this be my biggest lesson – to keep the faith, no matter what. I am reminded of the words in Hebrews, "*looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith*". My heart, my eyes, and my ears are turned to You today, Father. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Many commentators praise Elihu and give him credit for his wisdom, but I'm sorry, I don't get that at all. This boy is like a broken record. Honestly, he is beginning to do my head in and I now understand the age-old phrase, 'the patience of Job'! Elihu, at the end of his previous discourse, had severely badgered Job. He accused him of adding rebellion to his sin and of ignoring the wise counsel of his friends. Now he accuses Job of speaking wrongly against God, saying he multiplies his words against God. Once again, Elihu puts words into Job's mouth and in the process not only misquotes him but also grossly misrepresents his position. Elihu saw that God had not yet answered Job, and so his idea was, 'Job, if you were really a godly man, then God would have answered you by now. The fact that He hasn't shows your ungodliness.'

Elihu asks Job, 'What can you add to God or what can you take away from Him? If you live a righteous life, what's it going to add to God? If you live a sinful life, what does it take away from God?' I think he means that God is so above man that there could be no advantage for God in us living a good life. And what does it disadvantage God for us to live a wicked life? The fact is, though, it touches others if I live a sinful life; others around me may be hurt by it. They may be disadvantaged by my lying or cheating or stealing. Or if I do good, others may be benefited, like in feeding the poor. Man can benefit by my righteousness or be harmed by my sinfulness, but what does it do for God? What does it add to God that I live a righteous, holy life? These are really interesting questions that are worth a ponder. What can a person add unto God? I had better stop now; my brain is hurting!

Pray

Father, today I pray for all the people who have suffered hurt. Maybe a spouse has cheated or a father has deserted his children or a business partner has run out with money. Whatever the hurt, I pray healing for these people. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Now I am really struggling with this guy, Elihu. To make matters worse, most of the commentators actually like him and credit him with wisdom. What am I missing? Maybe I just love old Job so much that I'm struggling to see any of these muffins as any help to him. (Did I really just call them 'muffins'?!) Then I read Spurgeon's take on Elihu. You are gonna love this: *"I admire Elihu's attempt at brevity; I call it an attempt, for I am not quite sure that he succeeded, for he filled two chapters more. Yet he said, 'Suffer me a little'; and thereby promised to make his oration as short as he could. Some lengthy divines, with their many divisions, their 'Finalies,' and 'Lastlies,' and concluding observations, spin and spin, and cause their congregations to suffer, and that not a little, but exceeding much. It is well when we have anything good to say to use as few words as possible, for if brevity be not the garment of grace it is the soul of wit, and all our wits should be set to work to put gospel teaching into such a form that it will be the better received. Assuredly, short and pointed addresses are more likely to reach the heart than long and dreary sermons."* Boom! Every one of us preachers is thinking, 'Ouch, that hurt!'

This chapter started me thinking today of how God loved us when we were at our worst, when we were broken and lost. He listens to all our gripes and moans. He knows every seedy thought, every jealous insecurity, our worst inconsistencies, and our short tempers. And yet, His redemption plan was awesome. And best of all, it is for the "whosoever", which includes every single person to have ever lived and will ever live. The Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 5:8 that it was when we were still in our sins that Christ died for us, and then in Romans 8:32 that God did not spare His only Son but offered Him up as a ransom for many. Wow!

Pray

Father, as I read these passages about the vague display of friendship of Job's friends, it makes me even more thankful for the friend above all friends, Jesus. You are awesome and I love Your strong and eternal friendship towards me. In Your strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Elihu felt that Job needed a good dose of the greatness of God. It was good advice but wrongly applied to Job's situation. The Bible contains some magnificent descriptions of the thunderstorm, like Psalm 29. Elihu's poem is great stuff too, so I have included it in our prayer at the end. Elihu's speech began in chapter 32. He scolds Job for his claim of innocence and scolds his friends for their failure to answer Job well. He argues that God does not make unfair judgments and ultimately believes Job is arrogant in his claim of personal innocence and righteousness. Elihu believes that God responds to us in wisdom and fairness, and he condemns Job for calling God's fairness into question. Elihu concludes his speech with a powerful and poetic declaration of God's might and majesty and His faithfulness to the righteous.

Elihu may have been wrong about Job but he was right about God's power. Does nature reveal God's majesty? A resounding yes! Elihu understands that the concepts of greatness, holiness, righteousness, and justice all proceed from a great, holy, righteous, and just God. Elihu's message is that if the God of creation is big enough to create and care about His creation, He is big enough to care about you. If God is great and able to reconcile and resolve the mysteries and mechanics of the universe, He is big enough to resolve the mysteries and inconsistencies of human behaviour. God is big enough to care about your problems and wise enough to resolve them.

Pray

Father, I know this young guy had read Job wrong, but he did seem to get You right. I love these words: *"At this my heart pounds and leaps from its place. Listen! Listen to the roar of His voice, to the rumbling that comes from His mouth. He unleashes His lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth. After that comes the sound of His roar; He thunders with His majestic voice. When His voice resounds, He holds nothing back. God's voice thunders in marvellous ways; He does great things beyond our understanding. He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the rain shower, 'Be a mighty downpour.'" You are truly awesome in power and might. I love Your splendour. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.*

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Job's friends arrived on the scene in verse 11 of the second chapter so we have had around thirty-five chapters of men's wisdom at its worst and at its best. Now, at long last, "*Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said...*" I love this. God has been noticeably absent from the account since chapter 2. We read nothing of God's direct role in comforting, speaking to, or sustaining Job in the midst of his crisis, and Job has ached repeatedly for a word from God. I find it quite significant that when God does speak, He does not directly answer Job's questions. I also find it quite significant that God does not directly answer the questions of Job's friends either. But God, at long last, speaks to Job. The whirlwind is associated with the divine presence in the Bible. It speaks to us of the powerful, unmanageable nature of God, that He is like a tornado that cannot be controlled or opposed.

I love how God comes on the scene and doesn't address any of Job's questions that have been firing through the whole book. Instead, He enters the scene with a whole load of questions of His own. It seems like God is essentially saying, "Job, if you can answer these things, then you are fit to question Me. If you cannot answer these things, then you are not in a place to demand answers from Me." All these questions must have reminded Job (and they remind me today) that there were many things that he did not know. Job had no understanding of how God set the boundaries for the sea. How could he? He knew such boundaries existed but could never explain how or why exactly they were set.

I can think of eight 'big hairy moments' in Scripture when God turns up with stupendous power: today's chapter; Exodus 19 at Sinai; 1 Kings 19 with Elijah; Ezekiel 1 with Ezekiel; Exodus 3 with Moses; Acts 2 with the folks in the upper room; Revelation 4 and 5 around the throne in heaven; and Revelation 19 with the Rider on the white horse. Holy moly, these passages blow my mind!

Pray

Father, I know that Your purpose here was not to humiliate Job; instead, You seem almost playful in making the point that You are omniscient and man is not. That's my big lesson to learn today. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

In the final three verses of the last chapter, God brought the level of knowledge down from all the rain and stars information to the simple animal kingdom – to see if Job could figure even that out. In this chapter, God continues with the same questioning surrounding the creation of living things. The circle of life has been established by the wisdom and power of God: animals' birthing strategies, their freedom, and growing in the wild; the power of the ox and the simplicity of an ostrich, and where they live; and what about a horse's strength, the hawk and the eagle. None of us have any clue as to the mysteries in the animal kingdom. We can observe and study, but the fact remains that God looks after it as well as looking after us. Though Job didn't know these principles of the natural order, he had to admit that the natural order seemed to work pretty well.

All these questions from God brought Job to a basic conclusion: I see that this world made by God operates with remarkable order and wisdom. Should I deny His wisdom and government of all things just because there are things in my own life I can't understand? Or should I simply trust this God who does all these other things so marvellously well?

If we find it exasperating and a little confusing that God never gives Job any reasons for his long ordeal of suffering, then we have entirely missed the point of these final chapters. While it is true that the Lord's answer to Job is neither logical nor theological, this doesn't mean that He gives no answer. The Lord does give a very powerful and definitive answer. His answer is Himself. When we understand that we don't need to understand it all, that's when we fall into complete trust in our Father who does all things well.

Pray

Father, one thought, and one only, is brought into the foreground as I read this chapter: the world is full of mysteries – strange, unapproachable, overpowering mysteries that I cannot read. What I need to do is trust in the power, and in the wisdom, and in the goodness of the Almighty One who rules it, and that's You, my Abba Father. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Today's chapter continues God's challenge to Job, Him answering Job's *heart* without specifically answering Job's *questions*. This comes after the extended time of fellowship, wonder, and teaching in Job 38 and 39. Job, speaking from what he felt to be his God-absent agony, longed to contend with God. Now God is speaking out of the whirling wind before Job. What an amazing experience it must have been to have a voice coming out of a whirlwind! God employs the great symbol of the Spirit's power, the mighty rushing wind. He brings before Job another issue, another question: 'Can you handle the moral government of earth?' Job has already admitted that he is not in God's league when it comes to understanding the world of nature or caring for the animal creation. Now God says, 'What about the moral realm? That is the realm you have been charging Me with fault. Can you handle that? Are you able to put Me in the wrong in this area of morality and justice and fairness?'

With God now appearing in His love, glory, and power, I'm sure Job felt humbled about his previous demands. He now rightly feels he is in no place to contend with the Almighty, much less correct or rebuke Him. Job had prayed often throughout the dialogue with his friends, and it is interesting to me that he was the only one among them to speak with God. So many people can tell you all *about* God without actually speaking *to* God for themselves. After this interview/interrogation with God, Job will undoubtedly speak and think differently. There is nothing like a good old revelation of God that will make us speak with a different tone than we ever had before.

I love how God makes the point to Job. If he could not do these things that only God can do, then neither could he save himself with his own right hand. In other words, salvation belongs to the Lord. No man can save his own soul by works of righteousness which he *has* done, *is* doing, or *can* possibly do. Only God!

Pray

Father, I love the mystery and power that surrounds You. You are my Father who works all things after the counsel of Your will. I'm just so glad it all included me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Job 41

Live

The name Leviathan means “*twisting one*”. Just as Job was powerless against Leviathan (as all men are), so he was powerless against an unleashed Satan set against him. Only God could defeat Leviathan and Satan. If Job cannot contend with Leviathan (or with Satan, whom Leviathan represents), how could he ever hope to stand against the God who made and masters Leviathan? This was another effective way of setting Job in his proper place before God. Whatever this creature is, it is one scary boy. It is too strong for hooks, ropes, cords or spikes. The animal is dangerous. It will not beg for mercy or go for a walk with you. It will not serve as a work animal. It will not play with you or be turned into a pet. If all of this is true of God’s creature and the Lord is the Creator, who can stand against the Lord? Leviathan is a strong creature with powerful limbs, an impenetrable skin, enormously strong jaws, and fearsome teeth. With dragon-like features, it snorts flashes of light. It shoots fire and sparks from its mouth, and pours smoke from its nostrils. Its speed is frightening. It churns the water until it looks like the water is boiling, and leaves behind a shining wake!

One may rightly question, why does God permit evil and why does He allow suffering? Does God permit evil to reveal His grace? Some suggest that God is powerless against the forces of darkness. This is not what our Bible teaches; rather, it teaches that God will sometimes allow what is perceived as pain or suffering or evil in order to hinder an even greater evil. Only a person with a perfect sense of justice and the power to bring all things to a just conclusion can sort through the minefield of explosive questions. I often think how God ends His words to Job without ever telling him the story behind the story. Job was left ignorant about the contest between God and Satan that prompted his whole crisis. Amazing or what!

Pray

Father, though Job did not know the whole story, You did tell him of the great victory over Leviathan/Satan, giving Job assurance for the past, the present, and the future. Again, I am forced to declare my eternal trust in such a wise Creator God. I love You. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

So here we have it. God responds to a 5-man, 35-chapter debate on suffering not by answering all the questions but by simply showing up. When Job finally gets a chance to speak, he speaks as a changed, humbled man. No longer does he demand an answer from God. No longer does he insist that his righteousness wasn't deserving of suffering. *"I know that You can do everything,"* is his wonderful statement – speaking of the impressive display of the power and might of God over creation, but also speaking of the comfort that the presence of God brought. God indeed *could* do everything, including bringing comfort and assurance to Job even when Job still did not understand the origin or meaning of his crisis.

At the beginning of the story of Job we find a blessed and godly man; at the end, we find a man more blessed and more godly. It's interesting that God only gave one set of instructions to Job. He was to pray for his friends, the men who had argued with him during his lowest hours. Job had been forgiven and as a result, Job was expected to forgive. This was the command of God, and Job was expected to comply. From the short ending to the book that describes more blessings from the Lord for Job and his friends' gifts to him, we can assume he did as commanded.

My short conclusion is this: I still don't have the answers to suffering and heartache. The fact Job got a new family could never have healed the pain of the loss of the first one. But had he learned the principles of faith, trust and complete dependency on his God? Absolutely and categorically, yes! Only eternity will reveal the true answers to our questions ... maybe!

Pray

Father, today at the end of this book, I can pray with Job, *"I know that You can do all things; no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures My plans without knowledge?' Surely, I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' My ears had heard of You but now my eyes have seen You. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."* In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

